

Appl. No. 09/967,224
Amdt. dated October 14, 2003
Reply to Office action of August 12, 2003

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 16 (canceled)

Claim 17 (currently amended): The apparatus of Claim [16] 26, wherein said shaping means (e) comprises a plurality of sizers for mechanically forming edge portions of said sheet while said edge portions are still hot.

Claim 18 (original): The apparatus of Claim 17 wherein at least one of said sizers comprises water cooling for reducing a temperature of said edge portions below the heat deflection temperature of said polymeric material.

Claim 19 (original): The apparatus of Claim 18 further comprising mechanical punching means for producing a plurality of fastener holes in a first edge portion of said sheet.

Claim 20 (canceled)

Claim 21 (currently amended): The apparatus of Claim [16] 26 wherein the [selective] cooling means includes a water spray means and the shielding means includes a hooded chamber above said rotating belt, said hooded chamber capable of blocking water from said water spray means from contacting said remaining portion of said extruded sheet.

Claim 22 (previously presented): The apparatus of Claim 17, wherein at least one of said sizers includes a series of adjustable blocks or plates.

Claim 23 (previously presented): The apparatus of Claim 17, wherein at least one of said sizers comprises a pair of lateral forming block mechanisms.

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Claim 24 (previously presented): The apparatus of Claim 23, wherein the lateral block mechanisms are capable of being lever operated.

Claim 25 (previously presented): The apparatus of Claim 17, wherein at least of one said sizers comprises top and bottom forming plates.

Claim 26 (new): An apparatus for continuously vacuum forming a shaped polymeric article over a flexible rotating belt, comprising:

- (a) an extruder for producing an extruded sheet of hot polymeric material;
- (b) rotating belt means comprising a drive roller, an idle roller, and a flexible belt suspended over said drive and idle rollers, said flexible belt including a resilient mold belt portion for contacting said extruded sheet, said mold belt portion comprising a plurality of apertures therethrough and a mold impression therein;
- (c) vacuum means for applying vacuum pressure to said extruded sheet through at least said apertures in said mold belt, so as to draw said extruded sheet into intimate forming contact with said mold impression to form a patterned portion and a remaining portion of said extruded sheet while said polymeric material is still hot;
- (d) cooling means capable of reducing a temperature of said patterned sheet portion below a heat deflection temperature of said polymeric material;
- (e) shielding means for selectively applying said cooling means to said patterned sheet portion while leaving said remaining portion of said extruded sheet above said heat deflection temperature;
- (f) shaping means for forming said remaining sheet portion;
- (g) further cooling means for cooling said remaining sheet portion below said heat deflection temperature; and

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(h) cut-off means for severing a length of said extended sheet to produce a shaped polymeric article.